

REMARKS

By this amendment, applicants have amended independent claims 1, 13 and 15 to delete the term "immediately" in connection with the timing of the drying step. Applicants have also added dependent claims 24 - 28 to define further aspects of the present invention. These claims are supported by the disclosure at, e.g., the paragraph bridging pages 6 and 7 of the substitute specification.

Applicants, through their undersigned attorney, thank the Examiner for the personal interview conducted between the Examiner and the undersigned on July 14, 2004. During the interview, the differences between the present invention and the patents to O'Donnell et al, Page et al and Hazano et al were discussed. Those differences were set forth on pages 12 and 13 of the Amendment filed June 21, 2004. During the interview, the Examiner questioned whether the specification defined the term "immediately." The undersigned noted that examples of the meaning of the term "immediately" could be found at page 19, lines 11 - 12 and the paragraph bridging pages 22 and 23 of the substitute specification. A discussion ensued as to whether the specification explicitly disclosed conducting the drying step "immediately" after the rinsing step. It was agreed that the independent claims would be amended to delete the term "immediately" in connection with the timing of the drying step after the rinsing step. It was also agreed that dependent claims would be filed reciting that the rinsing step and drying step are executed in continuous succession. The Examiner indicated he would consider whether the amended and new claims are patentable over the applied references.

Applicants submit the amended claims are patentable for substantially the same reasons provided in the remarks accompanying the amendment filed June 21,

2004. Even without reciting that the drying step takes place "immediately" after the rinsing step, it is submitted the prior art does not disclose and would have suggested a method of processing a specimen including a first step of etching a specimen, which is a lamination layer formed on a substrate and includes at least one layer made of Ni Fe alloy or Ni Fe Co alloy, a second step, which is performed immediately after the first step, of removing a residual chlorine component by liquid rinsing, and a third step of drying the specimen after rinsing thereof by placing the specimen on a hot plate and by heating the specimen at a temperature below 200°C.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks and the amendments and remarks filed June 21, 2004, favorable reconsideration and allowance of all of the claims now in the application are requested.

To the extent necessary, applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136. Please charge any shortage in the fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to the deposit account of Antonelli, Terry, Stout & Kraus, LLP, Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (Case: 503.38156X00), and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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